

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 27, 2020

Leader McConnell
The Capitol, S-230
Washington, D.C. 20510

Leader McConnell,

As Americans continue to return to work and our economy recovers from the pandemic, it is imperative our K-12 schools reopen nationwide. We must ensure parents can return to work and provide for their families. Most importantly, experts have advised that reopening schools for in-person education is paramount to protecting the mental, physical, and social wellbeing of our children.

As a result of over \$13 billion in COVID relief monies, primary and secondary schools have the funding to open safely and sensibly. In fact, a U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report published in June found that by the end of May, states had utilized less than one percent of the money appropriated to them under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES). Before authorizing additional funds, Congress must ensure these taxpayer relief funds are fully and effectively utilized.

I urge you to ensure unspent CARES funding is used for schools commensurate with their in-person reopening, with a minimum of 50 percent in-classroom capacity. If the school or school district decides to operate remotely below these levels, their remaining funds should be distributed directly to families through an Education Savings Account (ESA). These monies can be used to assist families in funding alternative educational opportunities and expenses. For example, a family could use their allotment for tuition at an open school or education-related technologies and curriculum for at-home learning. Directing funds not utilized for in-classroom education to ESA's will provide families the opportunity to choose the next-best educational option that fits their needs. It is crucial we provide alternatives to families in the event their school does not offer a sufficient in-person option.

Every family should have the freedom and opportunity to pursue educational and developmental excellence for their children. While I oppose additional federal funding for schools when such a significant portion remains unspent, we must ensure any future K-12 appropriations exclusively support schools and school districts that offer in-person educational delivery.

Sincerely,



Jodey C. Arrington
Member of Congress

CC: Secretary Betsy DeVos, Leader Kevin McCarthy, Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, Senator John Cornyn, Senator Ted Cruz